

VZCZCXRO6623
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH
DE RUEHKL #0835/01 2950511
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 220511Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3279
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2639
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0107
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2678
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000835

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OVIP](#) [STEINBERG](#) [JAMES](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MY](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY STEINBERG'S SEPTEMBER 28, 2009
LUNCH WITH MALAYSIAN POLITICIANS AND CIVIL SOCIETY
REPRESENTATIVES

11. (SBU) September 28, 2009; 12:30 p.m.; The Ambassador's residence; Kuala Lumpur.

12. (SBU) Participants:

U.S.

The Deputy Secretary
Ambassador Keith
Ambassador Joseph DeTrani, Directorate of National
Intelligence
Joseph Donovan, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
Scot Marciel, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, EAP
Derek Mitchell, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of
Defense
Rear Admiral Joseph Leidig, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Pamela Park, Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary
Brian McFeeters, Political Counselor, U.S. Embassy Kuala
Lumpur (notetaker)

MALAYSIA

Nur Jazlan, Member of Parliament (MP), United Malays National
Organization (UMNO)
Charles Santiago, MP, Democratic Action Party (DAP)
Dzulkiyly Ahmad, MP, Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS)
Michael Yeoh, CEO, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute
Ibrahim Suffian, Merdeka Center (Principle Polling
Organization in Malaysia)
Ms. Ivy Josiah, Executive Director, Women's Aid Organization
Ms. Tricia Yeoh, Economic advisor to the Chief Minister of
Selangor State

13. (SBU) SUMMARY: A diverse group of Malaysian
Parliamentarians and civil society representatives told
Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg at a September 28
luncheon that Malaysians looked favorably on the United
States and were interested in President Obama's message of
outreach to the Muslim world. At the same time, many were
waiting to see results of the new U.S. approach on the
ground, particularly in the Middle East, where
Israel-Palestine and Iran are sensitive issues. Most saw
China's growing influence as favorable since it meant more
financial and commercial investment in Southeast Asia, though
one Parliamentarian noted concerns about China's military
development. NGO representatives suggested that the USG
provide the GOM with training on identifying trafficking
victims and operating victim shelters. END SUMMARY.

14. (SBU) At a September 28 luncheon hosted by the Ambassador,
Deputy Secretary Steinberg told a group of Parliamentarians
from both the ruling and opposition parties, civil society
leaders and academics that the United States sought stronger
relations with Malaysia in line with its decision to devote

more attention to the political stability and economic development of Southeast Asia. Malaysia, he said, exemplified Islamic beliefs coexisting with a pluralist democracy and its role in international organizations such as the Non-aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference made it a valuable channel for overcoming North-South misperceptions. He asked for suggestions on improving U.S.-Malaysia relations and about U.S. foreign policy in Asia and the Middle East.

15. (SBU) Parliamentarian Jazlan, from the ruling United Malays National Organization (UMNO) party, replied that U.S.-Malaysian relations would improve if the U.S. were willing to talk about Malaysian interests generally, rather than just about counter-terrorism. He added that most Malaysians saw the U.S.-Malaysian relationship primarily in economic terms, but that China's growing influence in Asia convinced him that mil-to-mil relations were also important. Parliamentarian from the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) Santiago said President Obama's election had led Malaysians to question why Malaysia did not give equal opportunities to all races. Most other comments focused not on U.S.-Malaysian relations per se, but on the U.S. global role, particularly in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

16. (SBU) Parliamentarian from the opposition People's Islamic Party (PAS) Dzulkifly, describing himself as an "Islamic democrat," said that Malaysians had welcomed President Obama's outreach to the Muslim world including his June speech in Cairo. However, "after the early excitement," some were beginning to wonder whether concrete policy responses would follow. Merdeka Center's Suffian said that polls

KUALA LUMP 00000835 002 OF 002

consistently show that the Malaysian public's main foreign policy interest is in Palestine. The plight of the Palestinian people was an emotional issue for Malaysians, the only foreign policy issue that many Malaysians cared about, Jazlan added. NGO activist Josiah said not to underestimate the hatred that many Malaysians feel toward Israel. Suffian said news about Israel and Palestine comes largely from Arab media sources, whereas most Malaysians don't believe CNN and BBC reporting about the Middle East. He added that Malaysians were quite interested in the USG's efforts to make progress on Israeli-Palestinian peace and respected President Obama for making a renewed effort.

17. (SBU) Turning to the U.S. role in Afghanistan, Suffian said that educated Malaysians saw U.S. involvement there as important for regional security; this contrasted with views of Iraq operations as an unjustified occupation. Jazlan added that some young Malaysians saw U.S. operations in Afghanistan as anti-Muslim; it was important to educate them and "pull them back into the mainstream." Santiago added that Malaysians understood that Afghanistan and Pakistan would only become more unstable if the U.S. were to withdraw.

18. (SBU) Jazlan said that he personally believed that Iran was likely buying time until it could complete development of nuclear weapons, so he understood the need for international nonproliferation efforts. However, "because of Israel," any U.S. action against Iran "would not be popular in Malaysia." Dzulkifly disagreed with Jazlan's first point, saying that it was clear to him that Iran was pursuing the peaceful use of nuclear energy "and nothing beyond that." He argued that U.S. moves against Iran would be seen as destabilizing a now-stable situation.

19. (SBU) In reply to Deputy Steinberg's mention of anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) efforts as a USG priority that he spent considerable time on, Josiah said that the GOM needed training on identifying victims, sheltering those victims, and a focus on victim protection while trafficking cases were being prepared, rather than rapid repatriation of foreign victims. Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute CEO Michael Yeoh, also a Commissioner on the Malaysian Human

Rights Commission, agreed that TIP capacity building assistance was needed. Santiago added that he welcomed the attention to Malaysia's trafficking problem, which he had raised in Parliament, but that additional attention to Malaysians trafficked out of Malaysia to Japan and Europe was also needed.

¶10. (U) Deputy Secretary Steinberg cleared this message.
KEITH